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FEATURES — NEWS

IN THE GARDEN: Designing with Black and white blooms

REED PUGH | IN THE GARDEN

June 26, 2024 . 1:00 PM — 3 min read

Black flowers in the garden can be part of a color coordinated design. COURTESY PHOTO/REED PUGH

I had a couple of people reach out recently to ask what the “black” flower was in my last newsletter. I had to go back and dig up the list, bu “Dark and Handsome” cultivar of Hellebore.

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It made me think about all the great “black” colors in the garden, and how colors or a color can be used as part of a design concept.

When we are creating gardens, we are often looking to add color in all of the seasons of the year. The hunt for pink and blue or red and yellow from spring to fall becomes an obsession. Gardeners are always looking for holes in the season and trying to fill with new plants.

However, as long as gardens have been designed, color combinations and isolated colors have appealed to some.

Gertrude Jekyll was one of the most influential horticulturists, creating with color in the garden in the late 1800s. Her work is intertwined with the impressionist painting movement in the later part of the 19th century, and is still important today.

I also did a piece on color several years ago, called “Throw Out The Color Wheel.” Designing and choosing color is a personal experience, and while there are rules, they can be broken if that is what appeals to you.

The main point of this article goes back to the question about the black flower. Some of the most compelling and dramatic gardens are composed of plants whose flowers are devoid of color: Black and white.

White gardens can be quite dramatic, and when close to a space in which you spend time during the evening, they are enchanting in the dark with subtle lighting.

My previous neighbor, a Yankee pediatrician in our town for decades, was very proud of his white border and loved having me over to show off his latest raaaare plants (use best Boston accent). You don’t have to li
at Sissinghurst Castle to have a white garden — my neighbor had

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long by 5 foot wide border with a tree, some shrubs and a bunch of perennials.

White flowers in the garden can be combined with black ones to good affect. COURTESY PHOTO/REED PUGH

Black flowering plants are equally dramatic, but their dark color can get lost in a garden. However, many plants have dark or “black” foliage and can add to the drama in the garden. Now nothing is actually black, the flowers and foliage tend to be very dark and often have a red, purple or blue hue.

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Combining black and white in a garden can be very special. Black flowers and foliage with white flowers and green or silver foliage helps each “color” to really pop as they are complementary, or opposite, colors.

Following is a brief list of interesting perennial plants to consider for flower and foliage, but it is by no means exhaustive. When you add in shrubs, you have even more options.

Remember, you don’t need a huge space, but you do need to create a defined space that strictly follows these rules. This is a perfect idea for those of you who like to hit the nursery and buy new plants for space that you don’t have in the garden. You’re welcome!

White Flower and/or Silver Foliage

· Anemone x hybrida “Honorine Joubert” - Windflower

· Cerastium tomentosum - Snow in Summer

· Hemerocallis “Gentle Shepard” - Daylily

· Iris “Immortality” - Bearded Iris

· Paeonia “Duchess de Nemours” - Peony

· Phlox paniculata “David” - Garden Phlox

· Physostegia virginiana “Miss Manners” - Obedient Plant

· Platycodon “Astra Double White” - Balloon Flower

· Pycnanthemum pilosum - Hairy Mountain Mint

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Black Flower or Black Foliage

· Actaea simplex “Black Negligee” (White Flower) - Snakeroot

· Helleborous “Dark and Handsome” - Hellebore

· Alcea rosea “Blacknight” - Hollyhock

· Aquilegia vulgaris “Black Barlow” - Columbine

· Iris “Black Suited” - Iris

· Heuchera “Black Pearl” - Coral Bells

· Ophiopogon nigrescens - Black Mondo Grass

If you'd like to brighten things up a bit, try adding a single color. All the shades of purple with white flowers are cool and calming, while red or yellow with white has lots of energy.

Reed Pugh is a Winchester resident.

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FEATURES

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

FEATURES

Celebrating Black history and culture with art, reflection, and community

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the enduring legacy of Black

March 3, 2026

FEATURES

Winchester residents share more snow photos

Well, Winchester, we made it through the weekend with only a coating of snow that

FEATURES

Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchest Music School always take place in Nichols

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amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 blizzard, Winchester News once again asked residents to send their snow photos. And here is what we received! Solmaz Amirnazmi said her daughters and

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

March 2, 2026

Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

February 26, 2026

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

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SPECIAL TO THE NEWS
March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

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